

Does Dirt Track Racing, with Its Toll of Lives, Tend to Perfect Auto?

Manufacturers and Public, with Recent Terrible Accidents at Syracuse, Brighton Beach and Elsewhere in Mind, Are Asking This Question with Fervor.

If you have strong convictions on the subject of automobile racing you will be able to find sympathetic listeners, no matter on which side your convictions may lean, if you will only stroll through New York's Benzine Boulevard and ask the manufacturers of automobiles what they think will be the outcome of the recent Syracuse catastrophe, in which eleven persons were killed and more than a dozen injured. By crossing the street every little while you will get both sides of the question concerning the probable fate of the one-mile dirt track for automobile racing purposes.

If you believe it is right for such races to be run there are plenty of manufacturers who will congratulate you on your judgment. They will let you in on the secret that, after all, the public should be permitted to receive what it is ready to pay for with such large packages of its money. If you happen to have been shocked, are bitterly stirred and are angrily determined to start some new kind of society whose object shall be to see to it that the one-mile dirt track for automobile racing is blackballed, segregated and thrown overboard, you will also be received cordially. These sympathizers, you will be glad to perceive, exceed in number those of the other kind. Their opposition to automobile racing will sound sweetly in your ears. When a few of them will go so far as to say that all automobile racing should be drummed out of civilized countries, because the time arrived long ago when it ceased to teach anything to the manufacturer, you may find it difficult to keep from breaking out in song. It all depends on how strong you are for banishment.

He has vivid impressions of what should be done to prevent, make impossible forever, the recurrence of such an accident as killed those sightseeing eleven and injured so many persons at Syracuse, has the anti-racing manufacturer. If acrobats can be prevented by law from performing without an ample supply of nets stretched below them, he is of the opinion that there should certainly be stopped, by the same means, the use of all one-mile dirt tracks for death-inflicting races. The growing opinion of all manufacturers, he says, is that absolutely no useful purpose is served in this manner. For two long years, it is maintained, the manufacturers have not needed the huge that races have cost to assist them in locating mechanical possibilities for improvement.

Racing did answer several useful purposes up to two years ago. It taught the manufacturer how to build cars; a few deaths among drivers and the public showed the same manufacturer how to improve his output. In fact, the deaths at that early day, before two years ago, were, it appears, considered the necessary toll to progress, good workmanship, better car-buretors, improved headlights and all that sort of thing.

It was figured out something along this line: Three men killed on a one-mile track at Brighton Beach or Kenosha, Wis., multiplied by one improved method of producing rubber tire in Eastern Ohio, and behold! a new machine rolled out by some

plan in Michigan or Connecticut with death dealing accomplishments of an unknown efficiency—but a machine speedier and more beautiful to look upon than anything automobilists had ever before seen.

All this has brought the industry to the point where, according to experts, cars are built scientifically. It is no longer de-



stable, or even necessary, that fences be rendered into kindling wood, drivers made famous through the slenderness of their chances to recover in the hospitals and a great number of men, women and children killed and injured before the master mechanic of an automobile works feels enough confidence in his constructive data to O. K. a blue print of a new design in a glass vase for artificial flowers in a limousine, for instance. This is exaggerated. But the anti-race man is no stickler for trifles.

The buyer of the present day may feel just as safe, it is declared, with a car turned out by a company that is opposed to racing, but whose product is otherwise tested before being turned over to the purchaser, as when ordering his automobile from the manufacturer of the latest rapidly marveled as proved on the most dangerous of slippery mud circuits.

Manufacturers holding these views, and anxious to express them, climb to crescendo about here and assert that with 600,000 automobiles in use in this country to-day and 225,000 automobiles being built every year, it is the height of ab-

surdity to try to make it appear that the American people need racing any longer to prove that the standard of their gasoline gadgets is splendidly tall. They refer to such sad accidents as the ones at Indianapolis, Elgin, Ill., Brighton Beach, Syracuse and numerous others as the direct result of the money hunger of heartless promoters. They go so far as to express the belief that the contest board of the American Automobile Association will soon prohibit races on one-mile tracks.

Those disapproving racing under any circumstances add that even if some new racers do not want to continue, they go on the theory that the old racers have had enough of it—they should be compelled to do their hitting up on properly policed roads or on sufficiently banked and efficiently sized racetracks. Los Angeles, Atlanta and Indianapolis have these things.

The next place at which you call may be a disappointment to you. You may be of the exclusive set that does not own its automobile. Perhaps you have done your share of jumping. You may have started out, you remember, with a racing ambition to do something to help nail "to let" notices on all automobile racing grounds. The words

of the anti-racing manufacturer have called you somewhat. You say to yourself that you don't know but that you will go back to your work of earning a living and leave the anti-racing business in its present competent hands. And then you strike a man of the speed school. He is for speed Saturday, Sunday and throughout the week. He says when he dies bury him after a ride in an automobile hearse. You have only dropped in next door, or perhaps crossed the street, and yet all is so changed now.

As soon as you sound your first lugubrious note of the indignation you feel over the recklessness which resulted in the killing of eleven spectators at a state fair, the manufacturer of a winning racing car asks you how many persons were drowned this season. You have started out without any statistics on the subject. Why don't they stop swimming? asks the speed advocate. The one-mile dirt track is all right, he says, and the public must want to see automobile races on it, because there were about seventy thousand persons at Syracuse when the car driven by Lee Oldfield the other day ran through the fence.

No, indeed, the one-mile track will not be discarded very soon; he is sure of that. He is enthusiastic now. Of course, he expresses sorrow that so many persons do get killed and hurt at such races and wants it distinctly understood that when he says

the one-mile track is a good proposition he means from the point of view of the box office. Also it gives a lot of work to drivers. But he is opposed to the danger that lurks at the turns and would have it, not the small dirt track, eliminated. There can be no question, he points out, that the public must want such races. If they did not want them, the races would not be supplied.

The controlling body of the American Automobile Association has recently legislated against the half-mile track and will not sanction any meet that uses one. The one-mile is still open. The majority opinion of the contest board of the American Automobile Association is that the one-mile track is all right if it is made safe. In other words, it is all right if there is nothing wrong with it. Can such tracks be made safe? If the owners will spend the necessary money they can at least be rendered harmless in their relations to the public, it is declared by the racing element. But how about the driver of the car?

"That's up to him," is the reply. (In the same way that a prizefighter, a bullfighter or aviator kisses goodbye to all the comforts of home while striking for fame and \$1,000 a minute, so must the ambitious "rider with death" shake dice with the grinning spectre of his elbow, and try to see through clouds of dust and heat to dodge demolition while speeding on one or more wheels at the rate of a mile in fifty seconds. Not five bullfighters have been killed in as many years. In the

Some Makers of Cars Defend Such Speed Tests, but the Majority Condemn Them and Believe Their Knell Will Be Sounded Soon and Effectively.

United States last year there were twenty-nine fatal automobile race accidents. Before the present year is three-quarters over twenty-eight persons have been sacrificed to the speed mania. Since 1904 more than two hundred drivers and mechanics have been killed in racing accidents. As

The first day Marcel Basle shot through the clouds of dust into the outfall fence, and within an hour was dead. An inexperienced driver, with no recommendation except a \$2 license to sustain his claim of eligibility to clutter up the scenery at Indianapolis, last May was the cause of the worst accident of the meet, aside from those in which death resulted. This particular person became that. He was traveling faster than a mile a minute, but he didn't know here he was. He had his license from the association, for which he had paid \$2, but what he needed was a compass or a superintendent of grounds to act as bellwether. The experienced drivers present saw his predicament, but what could they do? Making halfpenny turns at a mile a minute, they had no time, much as they should like to have done so from the viewpoint of their own safety, to take him by the hand and lead him to a green knoll and urge him to take a milk route and let his fellows live long and happily. No he had to extricate himself from his predicament. He snorted straight into a collision that might have resulted in the death of a dozen men.

Oldfield declares that of the forty participants in the Indianapolis meet not more than half possessed other qualifications for admission than that of a license from the association. Los Angeles automobilists, enthusiastic supporters of speed, easily procured one of these cheap licenses for an armless cripple, who didn't know a carburetor from a horseshoe. It is said that there was no intention on the part of any one to enter the cripple in a race, but the point is offered that he would have been just as successful and considerably less dangerous than many of the enthusiastic though ignorant entrants in the Indianapolis sweetstakes, and, according to Oldfield, in nearly every other recent race.

Oldfield has "quit the game cold." Good drivers, he believes, will do likewise. His means before they are cold in death. When a champion racer has gone through twenty races without losing any feature of his anatomy he has the rest of his life in which to congratulate himself, according to Oldfield—that is, if he has sense enough to recognize the useless solitude Fate has betrayed in his case, and will resign to the less dangerous business of juggling with sticks of dynamite. The game, he says, is not worth the candle.

"The dignity of motor racing is gone," he says. "It has been permitted to degenerate to the rank of prizefighting, without any of pugilism's redeeming virtues. It has ceased to be racing and has become merely a morbid and unrelenting spectacle. It is run for money alone. Its profits are blood money."

And yet the opinion of the men who insist that dirt tracks will be sanctioned, even in face of the various high geared criticism that is now being aimed at them, is that only one thing will stop such racing orgies. That one thing will be, they say, for the manufacturers to get sick of it.

"But this won't happen," said one of these men a few days ago, "so long as the public patronize the races to the extent of 75,000 and 100,000 a day."

When a Plain Citizen Debarks from a Liner He Often Finds an Eager Audience

It Is Odd What Weight His Words Acquire in Certain Minds When He Becomes a "Tourist."

HAVE you ever noticed how the arrival from or departure for Europe of an individual of quite ordinary mental calibre seems to lend an altogether imposing weight to his or her opinions on any or every topic under the sun? Say,



HAWKEYE HICKS, CHIEF OF POLICE AT FERNDELL, OHIO, WHO HAS HIS OWN THEORY AS TO HOW THE "MONA LISA" WAS SNEAKED OUT OF THE LOUVRE.

for instance, that Gaby Deslys arrives at the New York pier and technically sets her No. 2 foot on American soil for the first time. Gabrielle of the Lilies is the translation of the name—her real monicker is Gaby Spunk. Well, anyhow, she lands, and there is the army of the press waiting. Batteries of gold and coast defence cameras protect the flanks and rear of the force, with the battalions of free lancers and knights of the mighty fountain pen forming a solid central mass grimly waiting.

She is so very glad to meet them all—but the gentlemen will pardon her a minute while she tells her story to the customs men? So over to the young pyramid of luggage by the "D" sign, where the official with noses that can smell a diamond through three layers of fur coat are rummaging. They dive down through her trunks, filled with pearls, to see that she has no contraband cigarettes or Portuguese kings concealed underneath, and having satisfied their professional curiosity they make a chalk mark which no man can decipher on the side of each unit of baggage and deliver Miss Gaby Spunk to the gentle hands of the impatient reporters.

Now, Gaby has never seen America before, be it remembered. All that she has seen of our glorious country is the panorama of skyscrapers and the interior of the steel-framed shed where she stands, but what does that matter? Here are some of the questions which she must answer as well as she can, the operation being a laborious one, owing to the limp in her English.

What do you think of New York? What do you think of New York men? Ditto New York women? What do you think of New York children between the ages of two-and-a-half and three years, not including the blue eyed ones?



Do you think that the go-bats of Flatbush are as a rule higher types of mechanical ingenuity than those seen along the Rue de la Paix? If John D. Rockefeller were a bachelor and had curly blue hair would you marry him for his money? Do you consider that Des Moines, Iowa, has prospered more than Galveston, Tex., under commission form of government? What are your sentiments regarding municipal ownership? Why? So Gaby, who doesn't know Battery Park from Grant's Tomb, handles the questions to the best of her inability. Those that her limited English vocabulary can't take care of, she answers with a shrug that can be taken either way. When she is through her shoulders are all tired out. It would be to laugh if one could explain to Miss Spunk the irony of it, but since she reads it all next day gravely set forth in newspapers of a certain kind, what would be the use?

By no means are these pier talks with all the only remarkable phase of the arrival of a ship load of passengers. About now is the time for the return of American vacationers who gave European hotel-keepers their money as against those of the Adirondacks or White Mountains. The minute some newspapers get a man with the Louisiana as a background that man apparently becomes automatically a last word authority on all subjects, from religion to higher finance. Every word that drops from his busy lips is caught on the points of the note-taking pencils and preserved as a rare gem of his kind.

Men who couldn't tell before they took their ten weeks tour of Europe and the Orient whether Michel Angelo was a prophet or a walking delegate for the Black Hand association seem able when they come back to give out all sorts of new sparks about how the school of Young-

er impressionists have the older members of the French salons eating from their hands. They deplore with tears in their eyes the fact that we Americans have allowed sordid commercial tendencies to run off and leave our artistic development groping in the darkness of a sun-baked artistic Sahara. Shame—shame upon us that it is thus!

The same rule holds good with the outward bound. The men who gather the interviews that are dish out to us in those newspapers which like that sort of thing have to travel a good deal on their journalistic intuition. What I mean is this: Before the steamer starts they go over the prospective passengers whose records are known. The reporters sometimes pick out a man who looks like some one and discover their mistake too late. For he it is known that the man who carries the most distinguished air about with his silk hat may be only old Dr. Onion, inventor and



HOW HE(S) SAW THE CORONATION CEREMONIES

sole proprietor of Dr. Onion's Pills for Poodle Dogs. There is no art to discover the mind's construction and calibre in the face (Shakespeare). The man who looks most like Mark Twain in America to-day is a pink eyed albino, whose genius for throwing his shoulders out of joint makes him doubly valuable to the side show with which he is now connected!

So, as I have said, the news pickers are bound to go wrong sometimes when they pick 'em by ear. Often they get a hint of a real unknown celebrity among the passengers in this wise:

The reporter is approached by a mysterious person whose hat is low over his keen eyes and who talks from the corner of his mouth while he glances about to see that no eavesdroppers are purloining his words.

"Are you a journalist?" asks a cautious man of mystery. "No, I am a newspaper man." "Well, that's a newspaper, ain't it?" "You are right." The mystery merchant draws closer here and, looking hastily behind to make sure that no one is listening, he whispers directly into the ear of the news collector. "Say, there's a mighty good chance for you to put over an exclusive scoop by interviewing the man I'm travelling with. (Reporter picks his ears at this point and allows his cigarette to go entirely out.) "His name," continues the mysterious one in a tense lip, "is Cornelius Cobb!" The last is pronounced in a voice of triumph such as one would use in secretly spreading the information that Napoleon Bonaparte was living under an assumed name in Passaic, N. J.

"And who," demands the cautious reporter, "is Cornelius Cobb?"

The other recoils in pop-eyed astonishment at discovering that a member of the metropolitan press should admit such ignorance. To think that we rely on such men as this to furnish us with our daily menu of important happenings!

"Cornelius Cobb," he explains, more in sorrow than in anger, "is known by every man, woman and child in Squawunk, Idaho. Four years ago he ran for Mayor of that flourishing city on the Independent ticket and was defeated by the narrow margin of 5,500 votes. His defeat was due to the furious opposition of the canning factory interests, who control the corrupt partisan

It's the Same with Gaby Deslys or a San Antonio Grocer—An Interview Is Inevitable.

that the latter is, however, true. Adam-chists are also growing more plentiful. I am utterly opposed to this political party and I fearlessly condemn their practices before all right thinking men—let the chips fall where they may. I am a plain, outspoken American citizen and when I am called upon to name a spade I call it a spade.

"I am an American by birth, environment, choice and education. The slenderest report that I was leaving my native shores to become an expatriate in Bulgaria has no lota of foundation in actual fact. May the American ship of state sail on until she reaches the highest peak in international prosperity and enlightenment."

These safe remarks being duly published in certain newspapers, next day they are cabled to Europe. This is the first time that Mr. Cobb has ever "gone abroad." Nevertheless, when he disembarks at Liverpool he immediately seems to be entirely competent to discuss intimate affairs of European countries with the correspondents of certain English papers.

He notes that England continues to build bigger Dreadnoughts, there being little indication that the navies of the world will return to the cheaper though less formidable wooden fighting vessels of John Paul Jones's time. He also ventures to suggest that the programme of constant shipbuilding and enlarging of armies will tend to make war less and less likely. The great masses of the English people, he discovers, are absolutely loyal to their King. As a whole, the English are a solid, thinking people—this being especially true of the middle class. Of course, there are a great many weaklings among the nobility, and even more criminally inclined persons in the lower classes. But, taking it as a whole, by and large, he can see no reason for the assumption that England's sun is slowly setting.

So orates Mr. C. Cobb, and it must be a great comfort to the masses of the old country to learn from such a reliable source that there is still some slight chance for the British Empire to remain in the front row of the congress of nations.

Having done his duty toward Europe in the way of seeing that he got all the hot labels possible on his trips, our absent brother once more negotiates the upward slope of the gangplank and turns him homeward. On this trip he is naturally entirely out of touch with his country, because he gets only a crumb of wireless news in mid-ocean. There was little home news in the European papers, so that he can't be expected to have any fresh thoughts on his native land nor any deep insight into the state of her political or financial health. Most of them get their thoughts from the newspapers, anyway, and hand them right back to reporters, to be reprinted as children of their own brains.

But when the boat stops at Quarantine while and they have feasted their hungry eyes on the dear old gas tanks of Brooklyn and the homes on Staten Island the returning passengers absorb through the vibrant air all the undercurrents and counterforces that have been making up the total of their country's recent progress—or so it seems. As the liner comes up the bay she slows down for the patriotic government tug that carries the latest newspaper man. A tanned short-haul sailor places a ladder against the side of the liner and the reporters board her.

How do the passengers at the swarming pier know that the boarders are reporters?

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